



NRC NEWS

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NRC ISSUES LICENSE FOR DIABLO CANYON INDEPENDENT SPENT NUCLEAR FUEL STORAGE INSTALLATION

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has issued a license to the Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) to operate an independent spent nuclear fuel storage installation at its Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant site in San Luis Obispo County, California.

PG&E intends to transfer used nuclear reactor fuel that has already cooled significantly from spent fuel pools at the Diablo Canyon plant into dry casks. The new spent fuel storage installation will provide sufficient additional interim spent fuel storage capacity to support the continued operation of the plant's two reactors until the current operating licenses expire (September 2021 for Unit 1 and April 2025 for Unit 2).

The installation will employ a version of the HI-STORM 100 dry-cask storage system, designed by Holtec International, Inc., and previously approved by the NRC. The system includes a steel canister that can hold up to 32 spent fuel assemblies, an "overpack" of concrete and steel to hold the canister and provide additional shielding against radiation, and a transfer cask used to move the loaded canisters from the plant's fuel-handling building to the storage site. The Diablo Canyon installation can accommodate up to 140 storage casks anchored to seven concrete storage pads.

The agency has also issued a Safety Evaluation Report for the proposed spent fuel storage installation. The report summarizes the NRC staff's analyses of potential effects on the installation from a wide range of natural and man-made hazards, such as flooding, lightning, fire, earthquakes, and explosions. The report describes the NRC staff's conclusions that the storage installation proposed by PG&E conforms with statutory and regulatory requirements and will provide adequate protection of public health, safety and the environment.

The license is effective for 20 years, and may be renewed.

PG&E applied for the license in December 2001. In addition to safety reviews and an environmental assessment by the NRC staff, the agency offered an opportunity for interested persons to request a formal adjudicatory hearing on the application. Several local individuals, agencies and citizen groups petitioned to participate in such a hearing. The NRC's Atomic Safety and Licensing Board held several sessions in California to review the petitions, including one in March 2003 to hear

statements from members of the public. Ultimately, the Board found in favor of the applicant and in August authorized issuance of the license. That ruling was appealed to the Commission, which upheld it in October. (Note: There is a judicial challenge to the Commission's ruling pending in the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit.)

The Diablo Canyon independent spent fuel storage installation license, technical specifications, and Safety Evaluation Report will be available through the NRC's ADAMS document management system at <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/adams/web-based.html> , with accession number ML040780107. For assistance in using ADAMS, contact the agency's Public Document Room at 301-415-4737 or 1-800-397-4209. For more information about dry-cask storage of spent nuclear fuel, see the NRC's Fact Sheet, at <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/doc-collections/fact-sheets/dry-cask-storage.html> .

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